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Abstract : Cost effectiveness of manual lymph drainage (MLD) as part of integrated care.

First of all we have to remind that MLD is part of the physical treatment of peripheral edema as recommended by the International Society of Lymphology (ISL). MLD is never used as sole technique in the treatment of edema .The physical treatment currently recommended by the ISL consists in: MLD, Multilayers Bandages, Pressotherapy, Stockings-Sleeves.

The relative importance of each of these treatment components is controversial.

We shall first present the results of an American cost effectiveness evaluation of the physical treatment of edema including MLD as recommended by the ISL. This study was performed in the state of Virginia throughout a ten years period and its results were published in the “Health Economics Review” in 2016. The mean target population of patients amounted to 1.400.000 per year.

The results provide strong evidence that the cost of the physical treatment of edema, when implemented according to the ISL guidelines, represents a minimal part of the total expenses incurred for the full treatment of the underlying pathology having caused the edema. The cost of the physical treatment of edema when implemented according to the ISL guidelines is partly compensated by a reduction of the complications of the edema and of the expenses accounted for their treatment.

Subsequently, we shall present strong evidence that MLD induces the unexpected opening of lymph vessels, which might lead to the cure of the edema.

In conclusion, we suggest to carry out further studies in order to verify whether the opening of “unexpected” lymph vessels does translate in clinical benefit for the patients .